

It is my view that a high concentration of media ownership has a negative effect on the variety of content available to the public. Huge conglomerates, whether intentionally or not, act as gate keepers to the market. For example, Clear Channel's ownership of over 10% of the entire US radio market skews content towards heavily mass marketed product at the expense of more offbeat offerings, of which there are many. In short, we get truckloads of Brittany Spears, but only handfuls of Remy Zero. And trust me - Remy Zero is cool.

There is also a political dimension to this. The commercialization of political speech steers broadcasters away from dialogue and debate towards sensationalized shouting matches and one-sided diatribes. Add to this a market pie divided among a few mega players such as Clear Channel and Viacom and you have a set of conditions under which it is difficult for a vital democratic discourse to occur. And the media has a duty to act as a forum for this discourse.

In light of this, I ask that media markets not be further de-regulated. To the contrary, they should be re-regulated. De-regulation is often touted as being conducive to increased competition, but this seems to occur more in the minds of theorists than in reality. The telecommunications act of 1996 is a case in point. Promoters said it would lead to increased competition. Instead, it has lead to oligopoly. Oligopolies, rather than being encouraged, should be broken up.

Thank you for your consideration

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